



STATE OF HAWAII
HAWAII STATE PUBLIC LIBRARY SYSTEM
'ŌIHANA HALE WAIHONA PUKE AUPUNI O KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAII
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October 1, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ken Kuraya, Chairperson
Finance and Infrastructure Committee
Board of Education

FROM: Stacey A. Aldrich
State Librarian

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stacey A. Aldrich".

SUBJECT: Action on Hawai'i State Public Library System Operating and Capital
Improvement Projects Budget Request for Fiscal Biennium 2027-2029

The Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) respectfully requests the support of the Board of Education for our Fiscal Biennium 2027-29 (FB2027-2029) Budget. The HSPLS proposed budget reflects the guidelines outlined in the Fiscal Biennium 2027-29 Executive Budget Request and the Program and Financial Plan for the Period of 2027-33.

The mission of the Hawai'i State Public Library System (HSPLS) is to inspire curiosity and create opportunities for everyone to read, learn and connect. Across 51 branches on six islands and two bookmobiles, that mission has taken on even greater importance. Our public libraries are more than places for books; they are part of the resilience infrastructure of our communities.

Resilience is built long before a crisis occurs. It is built when people have access to information, technology, learning opportunities, trusted spaces, and one another. It becomes even more important when families are struggling with the rising cost of basic necessities or when storms, hurricanes, flooding, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, and other disruptions affect daily life. In those moments, the same public library that helps a child learn to read or a job seeker complete an application can become a vital point of connection and recovery.

When normal life is disrupted, libraries provide something remarkably simple and remarkably important: a place to go. A place to access the internet and complete forms for financial assistance. A place to charge a phone and connect with government agencies and community resources. A place to sit in air conditioning, use a clean

restroom, talk with a neighbor, or bring keiki to story time and experience a moment of joy and normalcy. And there is no entrance fee. Everyone is welcome with simply a desire to read, learn, connect, or sometimes just find a place to begin again.

Following Lala, our Nā'ālehu Public Library demonstrated what this looks like in practice. The library opened even before power was restored, giving community members a familiar place to gather, relax, connect with one another, and find a book. When electricity and internet service returned, the library's role expanded: people could get online to reach needed resources, charge their phones, access information, and use basic facilities. The library did not suddenly become a resilience hub because there was a crisis. It was already there, already trusted, and already part of the community.

The HSPLS budget request for FY 2027–2029 is an investment in maintaining and strengthening this statewide network of community resilience. It reflects what is needed to ensure that Hawai'i's public libraries remain open, connected, responsive, and ready—not only to provide the services our communities depend upon every day, but to be there when our communities need us most.

This budget includes requests to increase funding for rising utilities, supplies, and repair and maintenance costs. It also includes investments in the infrastructure needed to provide efficient services, including new vehicles for delivery of materials, maintenance for newly implemented technologies, support to leverage Federal eRate dollars, and an automated materials handling system. Finally, the budget includes support for our new Upper Puna Public Library and services at the Waikoloa Public Library.

OVERVIEW OF FB2027-2029 REQUESTS

GENERAL FUND REQUEST

The following table provides an overview of the General Fund request for FB27-29.

In the FY28 Budget Request column, we start with the General Fund base from the previous year. The yellow highlighted cells presume totals as if all of our requests were granted.

For FY29, the starting General Fund presumes all base budget increases were granted and removes the one-time budget items (Digital Navigators, 3 replacement delivery vehicles, and book locker). It is quite likely that we will request additional funding in the second half of the biennium, which would affect the projected totals.

GENERAL FUND BUDGET REQUESTS

	FY27 BUDGET	FY28 BUDGET REQUEST	FY29 BUDGET REQUEST
General Funds	\$48,087,165	\$48,087,165	\$49,517,917
Total FTE (Permanent & Temporary)	567.5	567.5	570.5
New Requests for FB2027-2029			
Operational Cost (utilities, gasoline, supplies) (Base budget increase)		\$250,000	
Repair and Maintenance (Base budget increase)		\$500,000	
Technology Maintenance Costs (Base budget increase)		\$332,000	
Digital Navigator Program		\$1,000,000	
eRate Matching funds		\$310,000	\$310,000
Branch Manager for new Waikoloa Public Library (Base budget increase for full salary)		\$38,772	
Library Tech V for new Waikoloa Public Library (6 months of salary)			\$23,497
Library Assistant IV for new Waikoloa Public Library (6 months of salary)			\$21,738
Janitor II for new Waikoloa Public Library (6 months of salary)			\$28,290
Three replacement delivery vehicles on Oahu		\$200,000	
Book locker and maintenance for Mt. View		\$45,000	
Total Requested Funds		\$2,675,752	\$383,525
Total General Funds		\$50,762,917	\$49,901,442
Special Funds		\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000
Federal Funds		\$1,539,292	1,539,292
Total Operating Budget		\$56,302,209	\$55,440,734

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS FUND REQUEST

The following table provides an overview of the Capital Improvement Project request for FB27-29, which includes both Health and Safety funding and specific funding for facility projects.

CIP Projects	FY28 BUDGET REQUEST	FY29 BUDGET REQUEST
Health and Safety	\$35,000,000	\$35,000,0000
New Lahaina Public Library Construction Funding	\$15,000,000	
Hawai'i State Library Design Funding	\$5,000,000	
Wailuku Public Library Design Funding		\$2,000,000

Details for General Fund and Capital Improvement Projects begin on page 5.

Together, these requests sustain the public's ability to rely on existing libraries, extend access where distance or digital barriers remain, and bring new facilities into service with people and operations ready. The ongoing costs of staffing, technology, maintenance, and operations are what turn the State's investment in library buildings and collections into dependable service for communities.

If you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Mallory Fujitani, Special Assistant to the State Librarian, at mallory.fujitani@librarieshawaii.org or (808) 586-3714.

FISCAL BIENNIUM 2028-29 BUDGET REQUEST DETAILS

GENERAL FUND REQUEST DETAILS

The FY2028–29 General Fund requests fall into three connected priorities: keep existing libraries dependable; connect residents to materials, internet, and digital skills; and prepare new facilities to open ready to serve. The budget items are in priority order.

1. Operational Cost (utilities, gasoline, supplies) [FY28] \$250,000

A library cannot serve its community without power, water, clean facilities, and the supplies needed for daily work. HSPLS requests \$250,000 in recurring funds to meet these basic costs and keep statewide delivery and technology support moving. The request reflects rising prices and the return of utility expenses as renovated branches reopen.

Utilities

Total utility costs rose approximately 8% from FY25 to FY26. Costs also vary as branches close for renovation and reopen. Kāneʻohe, Princeville, and Kahului public libraries have reopened, restoring their electricity, water, and sewer expenses. Planned renovations at Pearl City and Makawao will temporarily reduce costs at those sites. The request assumes a 5% increase for electricity, water, and sewer and adds \$168,519 over the prior year to cover required service.

Fuel

HSPLS operates two bookmobiles, nine delivery vans, and seven IT vans. Bookmobiles bring service to remote communities. Delivery routes on four islands move materials and supplies between branches so patrons have access to a statewide collection. Patrons often cite the statewide collection as one of the most valued features of our system. IT staff transport equipment and maintain technology at 51 branches and three support facilities. A second driver on Hawaiʻi Island will increase route capacity and fuel use. The requested 15% fuel increase adds \$5,350 over the prior year.

Supplies

Branches need basic custodial supplies, printer toner, and specialized materials for processing library books. Vendor, shipping, and fuel costs have increased, and specialized processing supplies have limited sources. The request adds \$76,131 over the prior year to maintain these essential operations.

2. Repair and Maintenance [FY28] \$500,000

For many residents, the library is a dependable public space for learning, connection, and access to services. Keeping that space safe requires steady care. HSPLS maintains 51 branches and three administrative spaces; approximately 60% of its buildings were constructed before 1970. An additional \$500,000 in recurring funds would bring the repair and maintenance budget to \$2 million, allowing HSPLS to address urgent repairs and preventive work before smaller problems become more costly disruptions. The request also includes furniture and fixtures for the new Upper Puna Public Library.

3. Technology Maintenance Costs [FY28] \$332,000

The State has already invested in RFID technology that helps people borrow materials more conveniently and allows staff to move those materials efficiently. RFID, self-checkout stations, self-return shelves, a book locker, and automated materials handling all depend on software, maintenance, and technical support that must be renewed with the vendor. Without recurring support, equipment failures could interrupt service and diminish the value of those investments.

Annual estimates include \$292,300 for 349 pieces of RFID equipment and systemwide software, \$12,000 for self-return shelves, \$2,700 for the Hāna book locker, and \$25,000 for automated materials handling. HSPLS requests \$332,000 in its base budget to continue statewide maintenance for the equipment.

4. eRate Matching Funds [FY28] \$310,000 and [FY29] \$310,000

Library internet is a lifeline for residents who need to complete schoolwork, search for jobs, reach agencies, or manage daily life online. The federal eRate program makes reliable connections more affordable: HSPLS qualifies for an 80% discount on eligible costs and must provide the remaining 20%. Without the local match, HSPLS cannot access the federal discount. The State's investment therefore unlocks a much larger federal investment in library connectivity, helping HSPLS maintain reliable service, particularly in rural communities.

For example, an annual broadband cost of \$679,915.80 falls to a local share of \$135,983.16 after an 80% discount. HSPLS has used eRate since FY2020 to expand connectivity and maintain network capacity. Recent Category II applications for internal connections, managed services, and basic maintenance have been deemed eligible for \$2,487,640.47 in federal support, with an estimated local share cost of \$621,910.12 through 2030. HSPLS requests \$310,000 in each year of the biennium to provide the local match and unlock this federal investment.

5. Branch Manager for New Waikoloa Library [FY28] \$38,772

A new building does not become a functioning library on the day construction ends. Its collection, staff, service areas, and daily operations must be planned ahead of the opening. A new permanent Waikoloa branch manager position and six months of funding was approved in FY27 budget; the request for FY28 will address the remaining amount necessary to fully fund the new permanent position. The manager will guide design and furniture decisions, develop and purchase the collection, set up operational processes and help recruit the opening team.

6. Library Tech V for new Waikoloa Public Library [FY29] \$23,497

Construction bids for the Waikoloa Public Library are being reviewed by DAGS, with construction targeted for completion in late FY29 or early FY30. HSPLS requests one new permanent Library Technician V position and six months of funding in FY29. Hiring before opening will allow the employee to help prepare collections, systems, service workflows, and help the new branch welcome patrons when the building is ready.

7. Library Assistant IV for new Waikoloa Public Library [FY29] \$21,738

HSPLS requests one permanent Library Assistant IV position and six months of funding in FY29 to prepare the Waikoloa Public Library for opening. The position will help ready the collection and prepare the branch to welcome the community.

8. Janitor II for new Waikoloa Public Library [FY29] \$28,290

HSPLS requests one permanent Janitor II position and six months of funding in FY29 to prepare and maintain the new Waikoloa facility. Bringing a janitor on board before opening will help ensure the building is clean, safe, and ready for staff and patrons.

10. Three Replacement Delivery Vehicles [FY28] \$200,000

A shared statewide collection only works when materials can travel reliably between libraries. Delivery vehicles carry holds and supplies across branch routes, allowing a patron to benefit from resources beyond the local shelves. Funding three replacement vehicles would sustain those routes and reduce service disruptions when aging vehicles are unavailable. On average, the current vehicles average approximately 140,000 miles per vehicle. The intent is to transition the current gas-powered vehicles to electric vehicles.

11. Book locker and maintenance for Mt. View Community [FY28] \$45,000

The new Upper Puna Public Library in Kea'au will combine the Mountain View and Kea'au public and school libraries into one larger public library. It will also make an in-person library visit a longer trip for residents of Mountain View and Volcano. A book locker in Mountain View would preserve a convenient way to use the statewide collection: patrons could place holds and pick up materials close to home. The \$45,000 request supports this practical access point and its maintenance for year one.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS REQUEST DETAILS

These capital improvement project requests represent strategic investments in three closely connected priorities: protecting public assets and addressing health and safety needs; restoring a vital library resource to the Lahaina community; and modernizing aging facilities so they can continue serving Hawai'i's communities for generations. Timely funding will help HSPLS keep critical projects moving, avoid additional costs caused by delay, leverage available federal resources, and preserve important public facilities and collections.

Health and Safety [FY28] \$35,000,000 and [FY29] \$35,000,000

HSPLS is requesting \$35 million in Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Health and Safety funding in both FY28 and FY29. This funding is essential to keep projects already in progress moving into construction without interruption and to allow HSPLS to initiate new critical facility projects.

Several projects have experienced delays during the permitting process, contributing to increased costs. These include major renovation projects at Pearl City Public Library and Makawao Public Library. In addition, the Department of Accounting and General Services (DAGS) now requires construction managers for larger projects, which has diverted approximately \$5m of our construction funds toward construction management services.

Consistent Health and Safety funding allows HSPLS to respond to these changing project requirements, protect the State's investment in its public facilities, and reduce the risk that projects will face further delays and escalating costs because funding is not available when construction is ready to proceed.

New Lahaina Public Library [FY28] \$15,000,000

The Lahaina Public Library was destroyed in the August 8, 2023 wildfire. Rebuilding at the former location is not planned because of the significance of Moku'ula and the property's location within the tsunami inundation zone. A new location has been identified, and design work is underway with the goal of issuing a construction bid by August 31, 2027.

Funding for construction is the critical next step in restoring permanent public library service to Lahaina. Securing State funding will also position HSPLS to leverage FEMA funding and demonstrate the State's commitment to rebuilding this important community resource. Timely funding will help ensure that progress, starting with site selection and design, can move directly into construction without unnecessary delay.

Hawai'i State Library Design Funding [FY28] \$5,000,000

Planning for a major renovation of the Hawai'i State Library is nearing completion. This historic building's aging infrastructure is deteriorating and increasingly threatens the facility and the collections entrusted to its care.

The FY28 request for design funding is the necessary next step to turn a completed planning study into an actionable renovation project. Moving into design without delay will help protect the State's investment in this landmark public building, safeguard significant library collections, and prepare the Hawai'i State Library to continue serving future generations.

Wailuku Public Library Design Funding [FY29] \$2,000,000

Wailuku Public Library has served its community since 1929. Although the building has undergone smaller renovations over its history, its infrastructure was not designed to meet the needs of a 21st-century public library or the realities of Hawai'i's changing climate.

Planning for a major renovation is nearing completion.

The next phase must address aging infrastructure and include air conditioning and other improvements needed to provide a safe, healthy environment for the public, staff, and library collections. Advancing promptly into design will build on the planning work already completed and move this long-serving community hub toward the improvements it needs to remain resilient, welcoming, and useful for decades to come.